

Leadership: More Than You Think

By **Tom Mason**, Golf Course Superintendent, Birmingham Country Club



Editor's Notebook: Tom Mason has long been active in leadership positions in both the Greater Detroit Golf Course Superintendents Association and in the GCSAA. His leadership article makes clear his status as a successful, veteran superintendent. It appears here with permission from the executive secretary of the GDGCSA, Kate Mason, who happens to be Tom's wife! It appeared in the Spring 2001 issue of A Patch of Green, official publication of the GDGCSA.

When a person starts a new job, the issues that are associated with that person are all about "what you do." Can you grow grass? Do you know about golf? Can you manage money? Can you communicate? Do you understand the desired quality level? Do you manage the golf course or does the golf course manage you?

Most of these issues are addressed in the turf school curriculum and networking. In fact, turf related issues dominate what is taught in the school. Basic management issues are talked about

simply because one will obviously need to know how to manage a staff of employees to be a "superintendent" and grow turf.

After a period of time (honeymoon period), when your customers understand that you can do the job, then you, whether you like it or not and whether you know it or not, will be taking on a whole new level of issues. The "who you are" issues... such as:

- Are you trustworthy?
- Are you responsive?
- Do you do what you said you would do?

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- Can you forecast problems?
- Can you get along with other employees?
- Do you make other people better?
- Do you elevate yourself at the expense of others?
- Do you return your phone calls, mail and e-mail promptly?
- Do your customers perceive that you work to improve the quality of their product?
- Or, do they think that you work for the convenience of yourself and your staff?
- Are your budgets and reports on time and correct?
- Can you write and spell correctly in your correspondence?
- Can you speak to a group and get your point across?
- Do you see the big picture for your facility?

- Can you teach and inspire attention-to-detail?
- Can you handle problems? Do other people think that you can handle problems?
- Can you handle pressure? Do your employees think that you can handle pressure?
- Can you handle adversity? Do you have a plan for handling adversity?
- Do you develop your employees?
- Can you have an idea, sell the idea, develop the idea and then implement the idea?
- Do you know how to formulate an opinion?
- Are you consistent in your opinions and beliefs?
- Are you consistently polite and courteous to everyone, even to difficult people?
- Can you separate professional positions from personal posi-

tions?

- Are you perceived as accountable? Do you act like you are accountable?
- Are you quick to handle uncomfortable situations?
- Can you hide anger and frustration?
- Can you admit it when you are wrong? Do you apologize when you are wrong?
- Do you have good table manners?
- Do you know how to introduce people?
- Do you know how to make people feel included?
- Do you think people are comfortable with you representing their facility?
- Do your employees feel that you are effectively representing them?
- Do people at your facility think you hold a grudge and have to get even for things?
- Do women at your facility sense that you respect them and treat them fairly?
- Do you understand and incorporate delegation?
- Do you understand and utilize empowerment?
- Are you perceived as innovative? Do you reward innovation on your staff?
- Can you manage a meeting so that everyone has a clear understanding of what occurred?
- Do you have a "Bad News" action plan?
- Are you perceived to have vision?
- Do people think that you have a good understanding of quality?
- Do your customers know anything about you outside of golf or your job?
- Do you feel as though you are part of your community?
- How good are you at seeing the point of view of others?
- Do others think of you as a

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good listener?

- Do you understand your power as the golf course superintendent at your facility?
- Do your customers think that you use your power wisely?

I'm not advocating that golf course superintendents should be taught or told how to conduct themselves. What I am advocating is that we, as a profession, start talking about these kinds of things as issues. We have to make our colleagues cognizant that these kinds of issues and/or perceptions exist and are often expected from us. Superintendents have to understand that these "who you are" issues contribute to how effective you are in your job. "Who you are" issues are often the reason that superintendents get tired, even when the golf course looks great. Often, they are the

reason that owners and boards of directors feel no real passion to show the superintendent respect or raise his pay. Often, they are the reason fellow employees and customers fail to show superintendents the respect that they deserve and criticize their product. Often, they are the reasons superintendents can't seem to get the resources they feel they need to improve their product.

Isn't it conceivable that if every golf course superintendent knew and practiced an understanding of these issues, then our profession would be enhanced and many of the concerns that we have as a profession would be addressed?

To my way of thinking, golf course superintendents have to become professional by everyone's definition of professional, not just by our definition. ♣

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